TRANSCRIPT—RAYMOND PRESSLEY

Interviewee: Raymond Pressley

Interviewer: Tealey Ellis and Judith Robertson

Interview Date: April 4, 2019

Location: 1 Taylor Road, Fairview Public Library

Length: 1 digital recording; 00:48:40

Transcriber: Rev.com

Transcription Date: November 2, 2022

Abstract: Raymond Pressley discusses his experience living in Fairview, North Carolina, including his childhood, moving to Fairview at a young age, and attending school there. He also talks about his experiences as a stone mason, working on projects such as the Biltmore House. Pressley mentions the floods that occurred in the area, including one in 1972 that caused significant damage. He also discusses hunting, fishing, and other recreational activities in Fairview. Pressley reflects on the changes he has seen in the community over the years and his overall positive view of living in Fairview.

TE: My name is Tealey Ellis. I am a volunteer with the Fairview Library Oral History Project. Today, April 4th, 2019, I am interviewing Raymond Pressley at the Fairview Library. Thank you, Mr. Pressley, for this interview.

JR: I'm Judith Robertson, a volunteer with the Fairview Oral History Project. The project is part of the North Carolina Room's Special Collections at Pack Memorial Library. The North Carolina Room's mission is to collect, preserve, and provide access to the history

of Buncombe County and the surrounding areas. Items in the North Carolina Room include paper items such as photos, postcards, manuscripts, maps, and the like, as well as recorded histories from folks like you. All of the recordings made and historical materials collected for this project, will become part of the permanent collection at Pack Library. Your interview will be transcribed with your permission and preserved for anyone interested in local history, as well as for future generations.

With your permission, the transcript will also be added to our online database. The documents of all types, including photos and letters, will be stored in our climate controlled storage area. They will also be scanned, so there'll be a digital copy on the computer. If you prefer to keep the documents, they can be scanned and returned to you. Our goal is to find missing pieces of information and to record your first person narrative, regarding your experiences living in Fairview. I'm recording the oral history of Raymond Pressley at the Fairview Library at 3:00 on April the 4th, 2019, for the Fairview Oral History Project for the North Carolina Room at Pack Library in the Buncombe County Library System. The conditions of use form for sound and video recordings has been signed by the interviewee.

TE: Mr. Pressley, I noticed on your information life history form that you were born in Haywood County. And so, maybe we could start with telling us when you came to Fairview, and if you would please include your parents' names and where they were born.

RP: Okay. My parents' names was Jess Pressley (-1983) and Beatrice Kerley Pressley (1913-2005). Am I talking loud enough? We moved from Canton to Bull Creek up on the parkway when I was four, and we moved to Fairview when I was six.

TE: Do you know why your parents chose to move to Fairview?

RP: We were sharecroppers.

TE: Okay.

RP: You ever heard of that?

TE: I have, sir.

RP: We moved from farm to farm.

TE: Okay. What part of Fairview do you recall living?

RP: Yeah, we moved to Gap Creek.

TE: Gap Creek. Okay.

RP: From there, I started at Fairview School.

TE: And, you would've been...

RP: In the first grade.

TE: In the first grade.

RP: Yeah.

TE: Yeah. You have some memories about it?

RP: Oh yeah, I had memories.

TE: Would you share some with us? Some of those early memories, and even moving on? You don't have to share everything, if you don't want.

RP: Yeah, I'm not too good a speaker.

TE: Oh, you're fine.

RP: But anyhow, I played baseball at Fairview.

TE: What position?

RP: I was a short stop.

TE: Okay.

RP: And then, I got married and moved to Old Fort Road.

TE: Okay.

RP: Got four kids, Dale and Robin and Wanda and Mark.

TE: Do they live in Fairview?

RP: All except Robin. Robin did, then he moved to Black Mountain.

TE: Okay. Well, he's not far away.

RP: All of them's close.

TE: What are some of your memories of your elementary school period time? Maybe a favorite teacher, or something maybe big, that happened in elementary school.

RP: I'll tell you. Well, most of the time the teachers, I was pretty mean.

TE: No.

RP: I got a lot of paddling, but it's just a little paddlings. And I got to the fifth grade and I had Miss Rome and Miss Alexander taught the fifth grade. And they was both tough.

TE: Had to be, I guess.

RP: Yeah. I got first or second day in Miss Rome's room, I done something and she gave me a paddling.

TE: Uh-oh.

RP: I'll tell you, it hurt. I learnt more that year, I never got another paddling all year.

TE: One's all it took.

RP: That's right. I learnt more that year, than I learnt, because I didn't want another whipping than that one.

TE: Did the teacher inform your parents that you had gotten paddled at school? Or, did you tell them? Or, did they ever know?

RP: I told them that.

TE: Oh, you told them. Okay. Did you get a paddling at home too?

RP: No.

TE: Okay.

RP: I didn't, because I got a good one at school.

TE: At school. They figured that was enough then. Well, what about maybe eighth grade? You would've been still been at Fairview.

RP: Yeah. I went to 10th in Fairview.

TE: Okay.

RP: And I quit. No, I... No, I went to 10th at Reynolds.

TE: Okay.

RP: I got a lot of things I better not tell.

TE: Oh, I don't know. Some of them might be interesting. How--first of all, do you think that going from ninth grade at Fairview, and then 10th grade at Reynolds, was there a difference?

RP: Big difference.

TE: Could you describe that difference?

RP: Big difference. The children from that area thought they was better than us, from Fairview.

TE: Okay.

RP: And, we didn't get along.

TE: Did those kids say anything to you face, or just talk about...

RP: Well...

TE: ... Someone?

RP: This ( ), we was working down on the entrance way. One of them, I might not better tell that.

TE: Well, you use your discretion.

RP: I had to whip one of them fellers, because I was working, he was standing on the bridge throwing rocks at me.

TE: Oh, okay.

RP: So, I had to take care of him.

TE: You took care of that situation.

JR: Sounds like you were provoked.

RP: Yeah.

TE: It does sound that way. Yeah, it does sound that way. You mentioned your parents a while ago, and their names, and the type of work that your father did. Tell us about your grandparents. Were they in this area?

RP: No. They was from Canton too.

TE: Okay. So, they stayed there?

RP: Yeah.

TE: Okay. Okay. How often do you think you went back to Canton to see them? Just curious.

RP: Not very often. We didn't have a car when I was growing up.

TE: Okay.

JR: How did you get to school? Did you walk?

RP: No.

JR: No. You couldn't have walked. That's too far.

RP: Yeah. I did walk too. I got through-

JR: From Gap Creek?

RP: Yeah. I got-

JR: To Fairview School?

RP: I got kicked off the bus and I had to walk a week.

TE: A week.

RP: It wasn't nothing. I'd go down through there, I'd run all the way to the house, because I had to get home and milk the cows and feed the hogs, and everything.

JR: You were in good shape.

RP: Oh yeah. I could run home in just a few minutes. I didn't go the road. I went across the mountain.

TE: Oh, wow. You had a lot of energy.

RP: Yeah.

TE: A lot of energy. How long did you stay at Gap Creek, live there with your parents?

RP: From the time I was six, till I got married, and that was 21.

TE: Okay. How does Gap Creek look different today?

RP: A lot of houses.

TE: Yeah.

RP: Let me tell you this one. I met a blind man, Billy Miller. I don't know if you ever heard of him.

TE: I haven't.

JR: No.

RP: I got to know him. I was looking for land, and he said, "Raymond, I know where a plot of land is." That blind man, we come up to Old Fort Road, he took me and showed me the corners of that land, being blind.

TE: Wow.

RP: He was-

TE: Go ahead.

RP: He lived there. I mean, he was raised there, so he got his eyes blowed out with a hand grenade. But, he'd come up the road to my house after I moved there. He'd turn right down my driveway. He'd never missed my driveway.

JR: Wow.

TE: That's amazing. The injury to his eyes was in the military?

RP: No, he was playing around with a little homemade bomb.

TE: Oh, my gosh.

TE: Unfortunate. At what age, do you know?

RP: Billy?

TE: When that happened to him?

RP: About 21.

TE: Oh, wow.

JR: That's a shame.

TE: That is a shame, isn't it?

RP: I bought that place. I bought eight acres for $1,400.

TE: Try that today.

JR: Of course, that seemed like a lot of money then.

RP: I could buy all the land I wanted for $100 an acre back then, in '70.

TE: Now, and you still live on that same land?

RP: Yes.

TE: Wow. How does that look different, in terms of houses around you? Yeah. Do you know any of the people?

RP: Yeah. Oh, yeah. My daughter lives across the street and neighbor. Yeah. I know them all.

JR: Okay.

RP: Most of them. Now, there's some moves in I don't know.

TE: Well, there is a lot of moving in, that's for sure, having been one of them.

JR: But, you're on Cane Creek, aren't you?

RP: Yeah. I live across the street on-

TE: Okay. Yeah.

RP: Old Fort Road.

TE: When you bought that land, did you build a house?

RP: Mm-hmm.

TE: You built it yourself?

RP: Yeah.

TE: Wow. And what year?

RP: I lived in a trailer. I lived in a trailer for four or five years. I built the house in probably '76.

TE: Okay. And you were married then?

RP: Yeah.

TE: Okay. And what was your wife's name?

RP: Betty.

TE: Betty. And she was from Fairview?

RP: No, she is from Reynolds district.

TE: Oh, okay. So, there was somebody from Reynolds that thought there was some good folks in Fairview. That's all it takes, is one. Did you, on your land now and back after you built the house, and even when you were living in the trailer there, did you farm?

RP: All that land was growed up in pine trees, and I cut them all and drugged all the dumps and made me a garden.

TE: That's a lot of work.

RP: Yeah. I had to clear the whole thing.

TE: How long did that take?

RP: A while. A while.

TE: What kind of things did you grow?

RP: Oh, I grow now--I grow potatoes, corn, beans.

JR: Everything you needed to eat.

RP: Everything.

TE: And you still do that?

RP: Yes.

TE: Okay.

JR: And you had animals, chickens and cows?

RP: Had chickens. Never had cows. We had chickens and the younguns had a pony.

TE: Oh, wow. That was nice.

JR: That's great.

TE: That was nice. Did you build a barn?

RP: Yeah, I built a... Not a big barn, what we call a meat house.

TE: Describe that.

RP: And a potato house. The potato house is under the meat house. That's where you put your meat when you salted it down.

TE: Like a smokehouse?

RP: Yeah.

TE: Okay.

RP: We call the meat house. I dug back in the mountain and blocked it up and made a potato house, where I keep the potatoes.

TE: Yes, I'm very familiar with that. My grandfather had a smokehouse and a cold storage spot, like you described, built back, so I understand perfectly what you're saying. Neat. Do you still use it?

RP: Yes.

TE: All right.

RP: Yes. I've still got potatoes in it from last year.

TE: Interesting. Go ahead.

RP: I got some a while ago out of the potato patch.

TE: What do you recall as some of the best parts of living in Fairview, as a young man and-

RP: When you was young, nobody cared for you walking on the land, fishing on the creeks, or hunting rabbits on their land. Nobody cared. Now everybody cares.

TE: You don't walk on anybody else's property unless you have permission.

RP: No. It's a lot different.

TE: Did you do any hunting?

RP: Oh, yeah.

TE: What were you in particular hunting for?

RP: Well, I hunted rabbits and squirrels and coon and bear.

TE: Any deer?

RP: No. I've never been a deer hunter.

TE: Okay.

RP: I bear hunt.

TE: Yeah.

JR: Did many of your friends hunt?

RP: Yeah.

JR: That's interesting because all the people that we've interviewed, we have yet to have a man who said anything about hunting.

RP: Oh, yeah. My boys hunt. They hunt with me. We bear hunt. We bear hunt in Michigan, and-

TE: Still?

RP: Yeah.

TE: Okay.

RP: Here.

TE: How often do you go to Michigan to bear hunt?

RP: We go in September, about three weeks.

TE: Oh, wow.

JR: Wow. Yeah. You're serious.

TE: Yes.

RP: The UP of Michigan.

TE: Yes. It's beautiful up there.

RP: Have you been up there?

TE: I have been.

RP: Yeah.

TE: It's beautiful.

RP: Horn River.

TE: The thumb, up in the thumb area.

RP: Horn River. You heard of that?

TE: I have. My sister lived in Michigan, that's why I knew.

RP: Oh, okay.

TE: Yeah. So, have you ever done any bear hunting around here though?

RP: Oh, yeah.

TE: Oh, yeah? Do you ever...

RP: Yeah.

TE: Do you eat it?

RP: Yeah.

TE: Okay.

RP: Yup.

TE: Do anything with the fur?

RP: You can't. You can't sell a fur.

TE: Oh.

RP: I can give it away, and people has them tanned, but it's getting expensive to get one tanned. 8 & 900 dollars to get a bear rug made now.

TE: Wow.

JR: Well, I used to see the skins nailed to the barn, and people would be doing it themselves.

RP: That's right. But, you couldn't sell it.

JR: No.

RP: You can't sell nothing from a bear.

TE: That's interesting. I didn't know that. In the early days of where you built your home, were there other houses around you?

RP: No.

TE: No?

RP: No.

TE: What would've been the closest neighbor, do you think?

RP: The Peakes and the... Lewis Miller. Mr. Miller was... I bought the right-of-way from him to get across the creek to my land.

TE: Oh, okay.

RP: He told me one time, he said, after I bought that, he said, "Now, I'm going to tell you," he said, "That Old Creek can get up big."

TE: And, it did.

RP: I found that.

TE: And recently, Old Cane Creek has been big.

RP: Yeah, it got out a little, at the house this year, but not much.

TE: Not much. Wow. So, how has your neighborhood changed over the years?

RP: Well, all the houses. All the houses.

JR: Do you think a lot of it was people who owned property then subdividing for their children, giving property to their kids? Or, do you think it's other people moving in?

RP: A lot of that.

JR: A lot of that?

RP: A lot of that. Yeah.

TE: I'm assuming that back in the early days of when you built your home, that even though houses were not extremely close, was there a sense of community? Of people helping each other?

RP: Oh, yes.

TE: Yeah.

RP: Yes.

TE: In what ways did people help?

RP: Well, I'd come home from work, and Lewis Miller and his wife would be out in them fields getting up hay, and I had laid rock all day and I'd be starving. I had to go help. They was old. I helped them all the time.

TE: Do you know your neighbors now?

RP: Most of them.

TE: Oh, good. Good.

RP: Most of them.

JR: You were a rock mason?

RP: Mm-hmm.

JR: You do get to know people when you're a rock mason, because people need your services and you do get around. Do you still do it?

RP: Yeah.

JR: Gosh, it's hard work.

RP: Yes, it is.

TE: What did, in those early, after '76 in particular, I guess, after you built your home, what were some of the jobs or work that some of your neighbors did?

RP: I told you wrong about one. I was living in that house when it come, that flood in '72, so I guess I built that house in '70.

TE: Okay. Okay. All right. Tell us about the flood.

RP: Oh, lord.

TE: This would've been like you said, '72?

RP: '72. I think it's... It started on the 9th, before Memorial Day. It was raining and I went to bed, woke up about two o'clock, and I heard all this roar.

TE: Ooh.

RP: And I went out and I had two of my coon dogs tied down next to the creek, and I went off the bank to go get them, and the water's up to my waist.

TE: Oh, my goodness.

RP: They were still swimming. I was trying to figure out how to get over, because it's way over there, and there's trees, great big trees coming down through there. I was going

to swim over there and turn them loose and climb the trees, because I couldn't come back that way.

TE: Come back.

RP: My wife's screaming, "Don't go. Don't go." Anyhow, lightning was a-striking, the lightning was hitting, and as I was standing there, it was raising that fast nearly. My car was sitting and almost, there went my car.

TE: It left.

JR: Did you lose your dogs?

RP: Yes. I lost two dogs.

JR: Oh, that's a terrible thing.

RP: Yes. It was terrible.

JR: Yeah. Did the water come in your house that time?

RP: No. No. I built up on.

JR: Oh, that was good.

RP: I built up, but it washed my bridge away, washed my jeep away.

TE: Oh, my goodness.

RP: And my big truck. A rock.

JR: Oh, my gosh.

TE: All of the-

RP: I found my truck down the creek about a mile, and it looked like it'd been dropped off the Empire State Building.

JR: Oh, my gosh.

RP: It was tore all to pieces.

TE: I can't even imagine.

JR: And how did you get out of the river?

RP: Well, see, I was up on the hill where I built my house. It kept getting deeper, so I was scared to go over there, but I wanted to go to them dogs. But, if it hadn't been for all them big trees, you get tangled up in them big trees coming down through there, and I mean, they was coming.

JR: They could slam down and break your back.

RP: Or, pin you.

TE: How long did it take you to get out of the water then?

RP: Well, I just walked back up the bank.

TE: Okay. I didn't know if it was so... How swift it was.

JR: You weren't so far into it that you couldn't get up.

RP: No, I got in up to my waist and it was a-rising. I never seen it rise that fast, so I just backed up, went back up to the house.

TE: How long did the rain continue? I mean, was it days, or...

RP: No, no. Like I say, I went to bed, it was raining and it must have just started pouring, for it to get up that quick. I think it's about two o'clock. It raised up probably another two or three feet, but the lightning was hitting, and it was shocking the tar out of you.

JR: Wow.

TE: How long did it... If you remember, how long did it take for the flood waters to recede?

RP: By the next evening.

TE: Okay.

RP: Miss Whitson and Mr. Whitson, they'd just moved in a little bit before that. He come down there, told me I could borrow one of his cars.

TE: Oh.

RP: It got up again in '73 and washed my bridge away again. It washed my bridge away. I think it washed his away in '73 too.

TE: Wow.

RP: But, from after that flood, I always get my trucks tougher.

TE: Smart man.

JR: Park them up high.

RP: I don't wait neither. When it starts raining, I just get them out.

TE: Yeah. Other than your dogs that you lost, were there other deaths?

RP: No, just the two dogs.

TE: Just the two dogs. No. Well, that's wonderful, that no people were drowned or anything.

RP: No.

TE: That's really good.

RP: So, I've got my dogs way up high too, now.

JR: But, that event, that was actually more than just in Fairview, wasn't it?

RP: Oh, yeah.

JR: Wasn't that the whole...

RP: Oh, yeah.

JR: ... Like Asheville and all around?

RP: Now Lewis was telling me about 1916 flood. Have you heard of that?

JR: Oh, yeah. That was really the big one.

RP: Yeah. That was really big. It was a lot bigger than this one. He said it was from Old Fort Road from over to the... on the mountain.

JR: Really?

RP: In '16.

TE: Oh, that's hard to-

JR: Well, that took out so much of downtown Asheville, all that entertainment area, and residential.

RP: Yes.

JR: And everything out. That was really, really big, and you could still see the marks on the buildings today, how deep it was.

RP: Yep. Broad River was bad in '16.

TE: Wow. In addition to the floods in '72 and '73, that you've described and what your losses were, do you recall any other tragedies, if you will, or big events? Were there ever any major forest fires or anything that you recall?

RP: Nope.

TE: That's pretty darn good, I think.

RP: No. No forest fires.

TE: That's amazing. Pretty amazing. Every little area, every little neighborhood I think, has many different kinds of people living in it. And do you recall anyone in the Fairview area that we might refer to today as a character or someone who just kind of stood out, with his or her ways of being storytellers, or...

JR: Just big characters?

TE: Big characters, yeah. Yeah. Does anybody stand out in your mind like that?

RP: I get a lot of them.

TE: Can you share some of that with us?

JR: They got the free spirits up here.

RP: We had one. He was a fox hunter.

TE: Okay.

RP: I killed a fox one day and put it in his mailbox, because he didn't like coon hunters.

TE: Oh, okay.

RP: So, he put out the word that if he found out who put that fox in his mailbox, he'd shoot them.

JR: Did he ever find out?

RP: I don't think so.

TE: Well, he's still living, so I guess not. So, he was a big fox hunter?

RP: Yeah, big fox hunter.

JR: But, you don't eat fox?

RP: No, they just run fox.

JR: They just do it for the sport.

RP: You just get on the top of the mountain, turn the dog loose and get them a half gallon of liquor and build them a fire, and they let them dogs run around the mountain all night. That's what the fox hunters do.

TE: To each their own. Oh. I think also in every community, there's always maybe one or two people who are considered the leaders of a community area. Do you recall anybody that stands out in your mind, that in Fairview, that would have been a leader to maybe encourage new things to happen?

RP: No. The first man that come in here, buying land and building houses.

TE: Who was that?

RP: What was his name?

TE: Don't worry about it.

RP: I got it on the tongue, but I can't-

TE: It'll probably pop up there in a few minutes, and just out with it, if it does. What was the church community like in Fairview, even in your teenage years and through later?

RP: Well, I went to Emmas Grove Church. I was baptized when I was nine.

TE: Okay.

RP: In Cane Creek, right below the bridge where you go down Cane Creek. It was cold.

TE: Ooh, I bet it was.

RP: It was cold that day anyhow, it was about five degrees.

TE: Five degrees?

RP: My mom baptized me and my sister.

JR: Total immersion.

RP: Huh?

JR: Total immersion? They made you go in all the way?

RP: Yes.

JR: Yeah?

TE: That was a cold day, wasn't it?

RP: Yeah, it was a cold day.

TE: What was your church like, back in your early days, your teen years, and as you became a young man? What kind of things went on with the church, other than usual services?

RP: We had youth... we went camping, and stuff like that.

TE: Is that a youth group?

RP: Yeah. Yeah.

TE: Who would go with you guys?

RP: Well, the pastor, Bill... What's his name? Bill... And some of the parents would go too.

TE: How long would you be gone?

RP: Well, we'd go up on Butler Mountain back then. You know where that's at?

TE: Uh huh.

RP: You'd go up there, there was a spring and we'd roast hot dogs, and come off about 9 or 10 o'clock.

TE: Wow. That sounds like fun.

RP: It was.

TE: Your parents probably might not have thought so, but...

RP: Well, yeah.

TE: ... Children liked it.

RP: But, we had chaperones.

JR: But, they all wanted you to be familiar with the outdoors and be comfortable out there, didn't they?

TE: As a teenage boy living in Fairview, what kind of things did you and your pals do for fun?

RP: We went camping.

TE: Camping?

RP: Camping and hunting.

TE: Well, I know you didn't go camping with the girls, so...

RP: No.

TE: ... Where did you guys go on dates?

RP: Oh, you went to the Dreamland Drive-In.

JR: Oh, yeah.

TE: And where was that?

RP: Where Lowe's Hardware... Lowe's is.

JR: That's right.

TE: Oh, really?

RP: Yeah.

TE: Okay.

RP: That was a big Dreamland Drive-In, you drove up in your car and set and watched at movies.

TE: Yeah.

JR: Oh, yeah. It was a flea market by day.

RP: Well, later.

JR: On Saturday.

RP: Later.

JR: Later. Yeah, that's right.

RP: A lot later.

JR: Yeah. That was not when you were going…

RP: Yeah, that's one of the things. Go to the rec park and ski or skating.

TE: How many of you in a car go to drive in?

RP: We'd slip a few in the trunk. We'd put a few in the trunk because it was, each one had to pay.

TE: Right. What was it to... How much cost for-

RP: 25 cents a piece.

TE: 25 cents a piece. Wow.

RP: Yeah.

TE: I'm assuming you never forgot to let the people out of the trunk, huh?

RP: Oh, yeah. You'd have a car full when we got in there.

TE: What other things besides camping and movies, did you guys and girls do? You said skating.

RP: Yeah. The rec park.

TE: Did your church hold any kind of social events or anything, for the youth at the church?

RP: Not like they do now.

TE: Okay.

RP: No. We walked to church from Gap Creek to Emmas Grove too, me and my sister.

TE: Wow.

JR: Oh, gosh. That's a long way.

RP: It's not that far. Cross through the woods.

TE: I wouldn't want have to tackle it.

RP: I know we had to pass one neighbor's house, that had an old dog that'd try to bite us and he'd run us up a tree.

TE: Oh, no.

RP: One day I said, I'm going to break that dog. I got me a cherry bomb. You know what that is? A firecracker?

TE: I do.

RP: He run me up, I lit that and dropped it on his back. He never run me again.

TE: That was the end of that.

RP: Yeah. I had a rooster run me when I was a boy, about six or seven.

JR: Well, they can hurt.

TE: They can.

RP: I'd go down the road to a June apple tree. It's about a half a mile. Get June apple. And that rooster watched me come down the road and that thing get after me. I'd slip below the bank, try to keep him from seeing me.

TE: Did he ever catch you and grab hold of you?

RP: No. One day, I got me a pocket full of rocks and I broke him from running me.

TE: In your younger days in Fairview, what kind of stores were there here?

RP: Well, it was one... There was one out here at that car lot on the right.

TE: Mm-hmm.

RP: There's car lot on the left and there's one on the right. There was a little store there, and we had to walk... We lived way down on Gap Creek, but we had to walk there to get our groceries. About $6 a week.

TE: Wow. You almost pay that for a loaf of bread now.

RP: Oh, yeah.

TE: Well, you probably raised a lot of your food though.

RP: We raised it all.

TE: Oh, so you didn't have to-

RP: All we bought was sugar and coffee.

TE: Yeah.

RP: We took our corn to the mill and had it ground. But now, we did buy flour.

TE: Yeah.

RP: That's about all you bought.

JR: Flour and salt, sugar.

RP: Yeah.

TE: Coffee.

RP: Yeah. They wouldn't let us younguns have coffee back then.

JR: No.

RP: They said that wasn't good for you.

JR: It's also too expensive.

RP: That's right.

TE: The things we tell our children even today. Oh, my goodness. Did your sisters learn to sew?

RP: My mother made quilts.

TE: Okay.

RP: All the time. ( ) made quilts.

TE: Did she make any clothes for you children?

RP: Made all our clothes.

TE: Okay.

RP: We'd buy cow feed and hog feed sacks, and she'd make our shirts. Make the girls' dresses. Yeah.

JR: Well, those shirts would be okay in the summertime, but they're not very warm in the winter.

RP: No, they're sticky.

JR: Weren't they horrible--

RP: Yes, she did.

TE: How often did you and your pals go to downtown Asheville, in your teenage years?

RP: Not very often. Still don't.

TE: Still don't?

RP: I still hate to go.

TE: I don't like it either. When you did go though, what might you have been involved in?

RP: Well, we'd go to the Army store uptown to buy pants.

TE: Okay.

RP: After, this was later on. And Bonsworth?

JR: Bon Marché? That's where women used to show up a lot.

RP: Yeah. Woolworth's. That's where ( ) my wife. This was after we got married. I know-

JR: You get your housewares and things, at Woolworth's.

RP: Yeah. Yeah.

JR: All kinds of things.

RP: We didn't buy that either.

TE: A lot of folks had things given to them too. When you got married, your families would give you things for what they call setting up house.

RP: That's exactly right.

TE: Yeah. So, that's how-

RP: Pots and pans.

TE: Right. And people still do that, on a different level now, but it's still done. You talked about you being stone mason. Tell us about all these stones and stone places that I see around Fairview.

RP: Well, I used to do all the rock work at the Biltmore House.

TE: Oh, okay.

RP: Did it for several years.

JR: Like building walls, and retaining walls and bridge abutments, and things like that?

RP: Yep. But, I've worked all the way to Carowinds, I did a big Moms and Pops at Carowinds. I've worked Fontana Lake.

TE: Oh, wow.

JR: How long did you work at Biltmore? Many years?

RP: See, they just called me when they needed a wall built or a light repair. I've repaired a lot of them walls at the cactus garden, and where you entered some of them walls, I--

JR: Yeah.

RP: A lot of them walls, I built.

JR: What about houses? Did you work on any houses out here?

RP: Oh, yeah.

JR: So, you what? You've got a lot of chimneys up?

RP: Chimneys and the whole houses.

JR: Really?

RP: Yes.

JR: So, you can drive around in Asheville and say, I built that one, I built that one.

RP: Yep.

JR: That's a nice feeling.

RP: I went to Biltmore Estate today. I did a house for Tom Nash. He used to own the Coca-Cola bottling company.

JR: Oh, yeah.

RP: I went out there today. I've got to go do some repairs.

JR: You know a lot of people?

RP: Yeah.

TE: I've noticed here on 74A, that there are a lot of stone business places there. What was the cost of stone back in your earlier years of being stonemason, as compared to today?

RP: You get a dollar and a quarter for a square foot, that was a dollar and a quarter. Now, it's 22.

TE: Wow.

RP: This old... that was a store, that old building.

JR: The little square building on the corner?

RP: Yeah.

TE: The stone?

RP: Yeah. When I moved here, that was already there.

TE: Okay.

RP: That house and the Sales' on down that way on the left, across from that little beers thing. That's the only two stone houses around here.

JR: Wow.

RP: I started out doing stone work with Dewey Huntley.

TE: He was a person that lived here?

RP: Yeah.

TE: Okay. How long did you work with him or for him?

RP: I worked with him about three or four years before he retired.

JR: It takes a long time to learn that craft, and--

RP: Not really. Some people learn it quick.

JR: Do they?

RP: I got two sons doing it.

JR: Okay. Yeah. But, you like rock?

RP: Yeah, it's just like a puzzle.

JR: I think they're beautiful.

TE: Oh, I do too.

RP: Yeah. Just like working at puzzles. Brick work's boring, just the same thing.

TE: Same thing over and over. Right. But, you're right, it is a puzzle.

RP: It's just like--

TE: And, when you get it matched. It's beautiful.

RP: Yeah.

TE: Wow. In your teenage years, here in Fairview, were there any places to, if you had money to go and eat? If you had a date or something?

RP: Oh, Bill Ashley up here, you could stop and get a... That little coffee shop. He had a little hamburger place back then, you could get a hamburger.

TE: Do you remember how much it cost?

RP: Oh.

TE: Rough guess?

RP: Quarter, I'd say.

TE: Not today. Not today. Was there much crime in Fairview in your younger days, in your early days of your marriage? You know that time period? Much crime going on?

RP: Not much. No drugs either. Well, no drugs back then, killing our young'uns.

TE: Yeah. Was there any moonshining going on?

RP: Yeah, a little bit of moonshining.

JR: Didn't hurt anybody.

RP: Yeah. Find a still, there every once in a while.

TE: Every once in a while, you find one. Okay.

RP: I find where now, I know where it was when it was running, but old stills was, most of them all cut them down. But, you still see the old barrels and--

TE: You still see remnants of it?

RP: Yeah.

TE: Wow.

RP: When I'm hunting.

TE: Antique pieces.

JR: Well, out on our farm in Haywood County, the cattle occasionally would go through the ground and it would've been an underground storage thing, where they'd put some timbers up and put dirt on it, let the grass grow over it. But, it would rot in time, and then we'd find a cow with a leg down through the hole...

TE: Oh, my goodness.

JR: ... We'd have to get them out.

RP: Yeah.

JR: They had that stuff stashed everywhere.

RP: They had back about, I'd say 40 or 50 years ago, they had a still in that Ashworth Creek, below Ashworth, that farm.

TE: Oh, my goodness.

RP: And that stuff they was making would kill ya.

TE: I bet it would

JR: Oh, really poison.

RP: Yeah.

TE: When do you remember the people of different color moving into Fairview? About what time period? Or, has it always been?

RP: No. No. They've... You don't see a lot now.

TE: No, I don't either, but I am told by some people I've interviewed talk about that there used to be a small community.

RP: Well, there was a mix. Some mixed, Gillums, up on Old Fort Road, when I was a kid. They were mixed, good people though, the Gillums.

JR: No problems?

RP: No, but as far as... That's just here lately, seemed to me like.

TE: Yeah. Just curious. During the time of the Vietnam War, what was the attitude to your memory in Fairview, of people who might have had opinions about it? What was that like?

RP: I didn't know nobody had opinions about it.

TE: So, there was really no talk or discussion about the Vietnam War?

RP: No. I remember hearing about it on TV, people protesting.

TE: That's interesting. I guess I kind of thought that there might have been something in Asheville.

RP: Might be in Asheville.

TE: But, not here?

RP: No.

TE: Okay. Okay. What are some things that stand out most in your mind, about you living in Fairview?

RP: Well, I thought it was a good place to live and good place to raise young'uns.

TE: It was live and let live. Was that kind of the--

RP: Yes, it was.

TE: Atmosphere?

RP: Like I say, nobody tried to run you off of their land.

TE: I'm assuming in early years of living in Fairview, as a young man and becoming a father, that you felt safe in Fairview?

RP: Yeah.

TE: Do you feel that way now?

RP: Yeah. I had one neighbor though, that my kids was up the creek fishing, and I had one of my hound dogs was with them, and he come down there and shot one of my dogs.

TE: Oh, no.

RP: For no reason.

JR: Oh, no.

RP: And, I went to his house.

TE: I'm sure you did.

RP: Because I found the dog, the young’uns come to the house a’flying, told me they heard him shooting, and I went and found the dog. Well, the bullet had went in, it didn't hit no vitals, but the dog was in shock. Well, I took him to the vet and he got better.

TE: Oh, good.

RP: He lived, it didn't kill him. It just had him in shock. But, he come out and said, I asked him at the door and I said, "Which one of you shot my dog?" And he said, "Your dog was running cows." I said, "No, he wasn't. There wasn't no cows there," and my dogs didn't run cows, because there's cows everywhere. Anyhow, he said, "My son-in-law shot it." I said, "Send him out here."

TE: Oh, my.

RP: The woman said he ain't coming. I said, "He'll have to come out sometime." So, I sat and waited on him all night and he never come out. But, he got gone sometime the next day.

TE: Well, I'm glad your dog didn't die.

RP: Yeah.

TE: Yeah.

JR: Might have taught him a lesson then.

TE: I would hope so.

RP: I don't know. I was up fishing one day up the creek, same place, and had a dog, he was around the ground hog, and I looked, here he come down to the field with a gun.

TE: Oh, my.

RP: I stopped him.

TE: I'm sure you did.

JR: I bet you did.

RP: Same man.

TE: Oh, that man had a problem, I believe.

RP: Yes, he did. He had a dog, too. A house dog.

TE: Right. But, still a dog.

RP: That's right. Yep.

TE: Wow. Is there anything, Mr. Pressley, an area that we haven't asked a question about, or any thoughts in particular, that you might have had planned to share today, that we haven't asked about?

RP: Nah, nothing. Just about the flood, I reckon.

TE: Judith, do you have any?

JR: No, I think it's been very interesting.

TE: It has been.

RP: So, you're from Haywood too?

JR: Well, yeah. I've lived out there for a dozen years, but now I live really close to you. I live in Wrights Cove.

RP: Okay. I've done a lot of rock work up there.

JR: Yeah, I bet. There's some beautiful places up there.

TE: You said you still do rock work?

RP: I'm working about a half a day at a time. It's getting to where I... I'll be 80 in June.

TE: In June.

RP: Yeah. Gets a little hard.

TE: Oh, yeah. I'm sure.

RP: A whole day's work.

TE: I'm sure. I'm sure. Well, I thank you very much for coming today and sharing this information. I've enjoyed it immensely.

RP: I've not had much information.

TE: Oh yes, you did.

JR: Oh yes, you did.

TE: You did. Very interesting. Thank you again.

RP: All right. Thank you.

TE: Appreciate it.

RP: Nice to meet you.

END OF INTERVIEW.